



## ***LaVA Questions & Answers***



***What is the LaVA?*** A landscape-scale, Condition-based National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) analysis that will accelerate the pace and scale of active forest management on the Snowy Range and Sierra Madre mountain ranges for the next 10 – 15 years.

***What is Condition-based NEPA?*** A new planning strategy used to analyze a range of potential treatment amounts and types over a broad landscape rather than analyzing site-specific treatment units. Environmental analyses are conducted using existing data sets, spatial layers, best available science information (BASI), and professional expertise. During project implementation, objectives and design of site-specific treatments would be determined prior to any ground-disturbing activities using a series of field checklists developed as part of the analysis process. Condition-based NEPA results in a decision that is flexible, adaptive, and responsive to actual on-the-ground conditions.

***Where is LaVA located?*** On the Medicine Bow National Forest (MBNF), Laramie and Brush Creek/Hayden Ranger Districts, Albany and Carbon Counties, Wyoming. The project area encompasses the entirety of the Snowy Range and Sierra Madre Mountain Ranges and includes roughly 850,000 acres of National Forest System (NFS) lands.

***Why is LaVA needed?*** To respond to changed forest conditions presented by mountain pine beetle and spruce bark beetle epidemics experienced on the MBNF since the late 1990s. The epidemic has left behind hundreds of thousands of acres of dead trees in all forest types. Although natural regeneration is occurring, the mortality increases fuel loading, puts communities at risk, and threatens other values including forest infrastructure; municipal water supplies; recreation opportunities; wildlife habitats; and future timber production.

***Where would treatments occur?*** The Forest Service has identified ‘Treatment Opportunity Areas’ (TOAs) to help identify where activities could occur during LaVA project implementation. They were established by applying coarse filters, such as applicable laws, regulations, policies, and Forest Plan direction. The LaVA Project includes two types of TOAs— Mechanical (561,414 acres) and Prescribed Fire/Hand Tool Only (51,434 acres) — for a total of 612,838 TOA acres.

***What kinds of treatments are included in LaVA?*** Within the TOAs, we have identified 95,000 acres of even-aged stand initiation treatments; 165,000 acres of uneven-aged or intermediate treatments; and 100,000 acres of treatments for other vegetation needs, such as wildland urban-interface (WUI) protection or wildlife habitat improvement. Most areas have good access, but temporary or permanent roads may need to be constructed to reach other treatment areas.

***Are Inventoried Roadless Areas (IRAs) included in the Proposed Action?*** Yes. The Proposed Action includes roughly 124,300 acres of ‘TOAs’ in portions of several IRAs. TOAs in IRAs were proposed by cooperating agencies and the Forest Service to protect communities at risk; critical wildlife habitat; critical infrastructure, including fences and ditches; and municipal water supplies. No new permanent or temporary road construction would occur in IRAs.

***Does the LaVA use ‘Special Authorities’, such as the Healthy Forests Restoration Act (HFRA 2003)?*** Yes. The LaVA uses Title I and Title VI (2014 Farm Bill amendment) of the HFRA; these authorities provide for expedited environmental analysis and treatments to address areas affected by insect and disease infestations. The HFRA allows for a narrower range of alternatives and faster objection processes; it does not shortcut public involvement in any way.





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**How can planning be conducted at such a broad scale and still meet the intent of law, regulation, and policy?** We have broken the LaVA project area into 14 different 'accounting units' (AUs). The AUs are a way of dividing the LaVA Project Area into sub-units to provide detailed existing condition information and to facilitate effects analysis, decision making, and project implementation. Each of the 14 AUs incorporates a Canada Lynx (*Lynx canadensis*) analysis unit (if applicable) and a contiguous group of 7<sup>th</sup> level watersheds. The AUs will be used to increase site-specificity during planning and to demonstrate Forest Plan consistency and NEPA compliance.

**What might LaVA implementation look like?** We will develop a schedule to guide implementation over the life of the LaVA project. We will also develop field checklists that must be completed before ground-disturbing activities can occur. Some examples may include: an annual implementation checklist to ensure that individual projects, when added together, do not exceed treatment caps authorized by the decision; a Supporting Document checklist where specialists sign off that necessary field surveys have been completed; a law, regulation, policy checklist to ensure that individual treatments are consistent with NEPA, the National Forest Management Act, Endangered Species Act; and so on. Finally, we will host annual meetings with our cooperating agencies and our stakeholders throughout the life of LaVA to make sure that everyone remains engaged, information about individual treatments is shared, and that we continue to have a positive influence on the future condition of our forests.

**When are comments on the LaVA Proposed Action due?** Comments are due by August 21, 2017.

**What can you do to make your comments count?** The most useful comments suggest specific changes or additions to the Proposed Action or the analysis process. For example, let us know if you have issues or concerns with the information provided or the process we have used to develop the Proposed Action; state what you support and what you disagree with; and use specific examples to illustrate your concerns and offer solutions, where possible.

### **Where can I submit my comments?**

- Send written comments to the Medicine Bow-Routt National Forests, Attn: Melissa Martin, 2468 Jackson St, Laramie, WY 82070, or fax: 307-745-2398.
- Submit oral and hand-delivered comments to 2468 Jackson Street during normal business hours (8:00 am to 4:30 pm, Monday through Friday, excluding holidays).
- Telephone comments may be submitted to the Responsible Official at 307-745-2300.
- Submit Email comments to [comments-rocky-mountain-medicine-bow-routt@fs.fed.us](mailto:comments-rocky-mountain-medicine-bow-routt@fs.fed.us) (portable document format (.pdf) or Word (.docx) format).
- An electronic comment form is also located at <https://cara.ecosystem-management.org/Public/CommentInput?Project=51255>.

**When will the Environmental Impact Statement be available for public review?** The Draft Environmental Impact Statement is scheduled to be available in December 2017. The Final Environmental Impact Statement and Draft Record of Decision are scheduled to be available in May 2018.

